the 8th Five Year Plan period. The amount allocated to Bihar under the Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme (ARWSP) was Rs. 282.18 crore. Due to the under-utilisation of funds, the State Government was able to absorb only Rs. 161.704 crore, against which the final expenditure reported was Rs. 142.259 crore.

(b) 3663 not covered and 18319 partially covered habitations are likely to be covered and provided with safe drinking water facilities in the State by the end of this century.

National Social Assistance Programme

87. MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE: Will the Minister of RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that even the first instalment of money under the National Social Assistance Programme could not be released to Maharashtra in 1996-97 because of non fulfilment of necessary conditions by the State;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof; and

(c) the remedial measures Government propose to take in this regard to ensure that programme does not suffer in the State?

THE MINISTER OF RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI K. YERRANNAIDU): (a) and (b) During 1996-97, under National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS) Rs. 83.12 lakhs was released only to two districts namely Dhule and Ratnagiri and under National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS) Rs. 17.00 lakhs was released only to Dhule district of Maharashtra and no funds under National Maternity Benefit Scheme (NMBS) were released to any district of Maharashtra. Other districts of the State could not furnish the utilisation certificates for even 50% of amount released in 1995-96. (Maharashtra was re-' leased Rs. 13.80 crores for NOAPS, Rs. 6.07 crores for NFBS and Rs. 3.62 crores for NMBS during 1995-96). Consequently, out of allocated funds during 1996-97 of Rs. 79.40 crores (46.96 crores for NOAPS, Rs. 20.54 crores for NFBS and Rs. 11.90 crores for NMBS) only the above amount i.e. Rs. 1 crore could be released for all the three schemes.

(c) The Ministry of Rural Areas & Employment has taken several remedial steps such as:—

(i) Meeting with State Minister in charge of NSAP;

(ii) Chief Minister of Maharashtra was addressed to improve the implementation of NSAP;

(iii) Letters have been written to concerned district authorities, the Chief Secretary and Nodal Secretary for better implementation of NSAP. These letters are being closely followed up.

(iv) State Government has been requested to give wide publicity to the three schemes of the NSAP;

(v) Frequent review meetings at the level of Chief Secretary, Nodal Secretary and concerned officials of the State Government are being held; and

(vi) Central Government is publicising the programme over National Net-" work of Television and All India Radio.

Centrally Funded Scheme for Villages artisans in Maharashtra

88. MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE: Will the Minister of RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(b) whether Government are implementing any centrally funded scheme to promote traditional crafts and occupations of village artisans such as fishermen, boatmen (mallah) oil mongers (telis) and potters (Kumhars) in Maharashtra to make the village occupations economically viable;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and